

John Page of Middle Plantation: Patron of Colonial
Expansion

Zachary J. Loesch
Hist 495
Christopher Newport
R.M. Saunders
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Zack Loesch
7622 Ashe St.
Gloucester Point, Va
23062
(804) 642-5101

John Page of Middle Plantation did a number of things to promote the welfare and expansion of English colonial interests in the Virginia Colony during the 17th century as a businessman, political leader, parishoner of Bruton Parish Church and patron of College of William and Mary. Arriving in Virginia as a middle class merchant married to a woman descended from traditional nobility with powerful commercial connections Page was able to acquire vast estates from the headright land grant system. As a wealthy planter, his political power as a public servant enabled him to promote policies and measures that would ensure the colony's continued growth. Page was a member of the Governor's Council, obtaining this appointment after serving as a court justice and member of the House of Burgesses. He would be instrumental in the effort to found the College of William and Mary. In founding a Virginia political dynasty he became the progenitor of a family of powerful public figures who would greatly influence Virginia's history up until and including the time of the American Civil War.

John Page was born in 1627 in Bedfont, Middlesex County, about 14 miles from London.¹ John's father, Francis Page, died 13th October 1678 at age 84 and was buried in the chancel of St. Mary's Church, Bedfont underneath a stone depicting the family's coat-of-arms and bearing the inscription that it was placed there by, "John Page, his son, of York County, Virginia, Merchant."² The stone also has inscribed upon it a striking couplet that reads;

"A Vertuous Life and Good Old Age
Perfumed the Memory of Francis Page"³

John Page's mother was named Isabel. She is thought to have had six other children. John Page had an older brother named Mathew who died on the first of February in 1631 and is buried near their mother. Isabel died on the ninth January 1629.⁴ She may have been older than her husband Francis. Her son John would have been quite young when she died. St. Mary's Church was served by several wardens from the Page clan and in the secular realm the family was noted for surveyors and overseers.

Generations of Page family members have been buried at St. Mary's, a Norman style structure of the 12th century. John Page may have simply resurrected an old family shield. He had it placed upon his father's tomb as a posthumous gesture of filial piety. John Page's great-great grandson, Virginia's Governor John Page (who served three terms from 1803 to 1806) recorded the story of his ancestor's knighthood in an autobiographical work later quoted by Bishop William Meade's Antebellum Period book of Virginia History, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia.

The Autobiography of Governor Page, from which the following extract is taken, was written at the request of Mr. Skelton Jones, when he undertook the completion of Burk's History of Virginia:—"I discover from the

tombstones in Williamsburg churchyard," says Governor Page...that one of my ancestors, named John Page, was an highly respectable character, and had long been one of the King's Council in this Colony, when he died , viz.: on the 23d January, 1692, aged sixty. His manuscripts, which I have seen, prove that he was learned and pious... The John Page...above mentioned was, as we find by an old picture, a Sir John Page, a merchant of London, supposed to have been knighted, as Sir John Randolph long after was, for proposing a regulation of the tobacco-trade and a duty thereon, which if it were the case, I think his patriotism was premature, and perhaps misplaced. His dear, pure-minded American patriotic grandson, my grandfather, Mann Page, in his days checked the British merchants from even claiming freight on their goods from England

This passage indicates that John Page was knighted for advocating the regulation and taxation of the tobacco trade at a very early time in the Virginia Colony's history. The story of knighthood as a reward for tax proposals is apocryphal and probably untrue. Yet it reveals that John Page was raised in station because of the merits of a shrewd political measure that characterizes the so called Golden Age of Virginia's Plantations, a time when Virginia Planters still thought of themselves as Englishmen and worked closely with London merchants. The Virginia Planter of this time had one foot in the Old World and one in the New. The Page family are American nobility, having origins in the merchant middle class of England in the time of the Stewart monarchy. However a report by H. Farnham Burke, Somerset Herald, dated 6 September 1889 indicates that the greatgrandfather of Virginia's John Page, John Page of Arlesey, registered a coat-of-arms with the College of Heralds in 1566 that was virtually identical to that of his descendant. The ancestral John Page of the 16th century had arms that feature a fesse dancette between three martlets and featured the demi-horse crest of the Page family. In addition, three stags from the Greene family and a cross from the Latymer family arms were included on this antique shield. These are indications of family relations. The Page family Latin motto, "Spe Labor Levis" translates into English as, "Hope Lightens Labor."

Page's wife, Alice Lukin Page, also of Middlesex, is perhaps descended from nobility of a much higher status. The coat-of-arms on her tomb are the same as a baronet Lukin from whom she is thought to be descended. Alice's father, Edward Lukin, was among the early investors in 17th century colonial ventures, both in Virginia and Bermuda, known then as Somers Isles.

Edward Lukin, as scribe, signed the 1606 charter of the Virginia Company and as Edward Lukin, Gentleman was among the incorporators of the 1609 charter. In the 1610/1611 list of subscribers to the Company he is credited with an investment of L 37.10.0. He was also one of the incorporators of the Somers Island Company, 29

June 1615 and in 1618 he exchanged his "prize" won in the Virginia Company's lottery amounting to L 25 for two shares of stock. In the Quo Warranto of 24 May 1624, under which the charter of the Virginia Company was revoked and management of the colony thereafter assumed by the King, Lukin's name appears, in the original list of incorporators as Lukyn.

Lukin received 500 acres for his original investment of five shares. He received later dividends on his investment, also in 500 acre allotments. The close commercial ties between the two colonies of Bermuda (Somers Isles) and Virginia is indicated by the presence of British coinage for Bermuda minted first in 1616 appearing in the Virginia Colony prior to 1624 and noted in John Smith's Generall Historie.

"they had for a time a certaine kinde of money with a hogge on the one side, in memory of the abundance of hogges was found at their first landing." A ship on the reverse probably commemorated Sir George Somer's building there of the Deliverance after the wreck of the Sea Venture in 1609.¹⁰

John Page brought members of his family and other headright passengers to settle in Virginia in 1653. This was several years after the execution of the English King and during the time of the English Commonwealth. Page was twenty-six years old. For each person whose transportation costs he paid, John Page would receive a "headright" land grant of fifty acres. In addition, the transported person would owe John Page seven years of labor as an indentured servant. The list of names of persons transported by Page reveals that he brought a number of women to the colony. The evidence of a land patent record book reads as follows:

Mr. John Page, merchant, 850 acres situated on the South side of the freshes of the York River adjacent to land of Mr. Anthony Langstone. Date Blank. Page 212. Transportation of 17 persons: Sam Smith, Jno. Binias, Alice Page, Elizabeth Page, Mary Page, Thomas Twinn, Thomas Wadlowe, Marius Garrett, Andrew Coster, George Beachill, Mary Middleton, Joane Vallin, Anne Hill, Ann Cooper and Elizabeth Parsons.

Richard Bennett is the Governor making this grant. He served as Virginia Colony's Governor from 30 April, 1652 to 30 March, 1655.¹²

Due to the existance of another undated headright landgrant perceived as an earlier or older document, it has been speculated that Page may have made an earlier voyage to the Virginia Colony and returned to the Colony again to settle after he was married. Perhaps he understood from personal experience the need to provide wives for the colonists and recognized the valuable contributions women would make to the colony. At all events, he arrived at a time when Negro slaves would begin to replace indentured servants in plantation life. Alice Page was his wife, Elizabeth Page was his

sister and Mary Page was his sister-in-law, the wife of his brother Matthew who had also migrated to Virginia. John and Alice Page had three children, the first of which was a daughter named Susanna, thought to have been born soon after her mother's arrival in the colony. Susanna married a man named Walter Chiles by whom she had children. John Page's first son, Francis, was born in 1657 and his second son, Matthew, was born in 1659, two years later. It is through Matthew Page that the Pages of Rosewell and Virginia's Early National Period Governor John Page are descended.¹³ John Page travelled to London on business where he had his portrait painted by Sir Peter Lely in 1660.¹⁴

John Page soon became active politically in the Virginia Colony after establishing himself as a successful planter. John Page quickly improved his position in the colonial social hierarchy and might be seen as the prototypical example of the rising Virginia planter improving his station in the progress of his life. He became a member of the church vestry at Bruton Church, made a local high sheriff, appointed as a local justice of the peace and was voted to the House of Burgesses in 1655 to represent York County. Soon after he was appointed to the Governor's Council and in 1675 he was made a major in the militia. Page later became a colonel and head of the York County militia. In 1678 John Page donated L 20 for a new brick church and the ground for a church and graveyard that is known today as Bruton Parish Church, although a wooden church building stood at the site as early as 1665. The new church provided pews in the chancel for the minister, the Rev. Rowland Jones, and two parishioners' families, those of John Page and Edward Jennings.¹⁵ In 1672 Page sponsored seventy-two immigrants for which he received land grants in New Kent County, later to become part of Hanover County.¹⁶ He eventually came to own 4,000 acres in York, James City, New Kent and Charles City counties, including 330 acres in Middle Plantation--which later became Williamsburg.

John and Alice Page built their home on Bruton Heights in the year 1662 according to the mute testimony of a brick tile cartouche that was located above the entrance porch doorway. Its remains were recovered recently by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation field archaeologists in the Spring of 1995. The cartouche includes a family monogram on top of three letters in a triangle with the letter "P" at top, presumably an "I" (used at this time for the letter "J") in the lower left corner and an "A" on the lower right. The piece of tile with John's initial is missing. The date 1662 is shown below the family monogram. A small heart-shaped figure completes the diamond-shaped form of the decorative tile.¹⁸ The boundary of Page's land holdings in Middle Plantation have been described as consisting of,

much of the original bounds of the City of Williamsburg; most of Duke of Gloucester Street, the eastern portion of Francis Street, all of Nicholson Street, a stretch of Capitol Landing Road and a part of the York River.¹⁹

It was noted above that the home of John Page at Middle Plantation has been recently excavated by archaeologists working for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. A press release provided by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation on a day when the site was open for public viewing reports that archaeologists completing their work take with them a wealth of knowledge about the home of John Page and terms him, "the wealthy 17th century aristocrat who founded Middle Plantation, the town that preceded Williamsburg."²⁰ The article notes that the brick foundation of Page's house was discovered three months ago during construction of a road on the south side of Bruton Heights School. An archaeological dig then revealed an all-brick house--similar to Bacon's Castle--built at a time when most homes were of wood. The press release describes John Page's home in the following quotation.

Built in 1662, the house featured two matching square towers on the front and back; these were called porch and stair towers. These projections gave the house a shape commonly referred to as a cross plan. "This is a wonderfully crisp, intact footprint of a 17th century high gentry American home related to Bacon's Castle and a handful of other early cross-shaped houses surviving in the old English colonies,"²¹ Ed Chappell, director of architectural research said.

The Page home at Bruton Heights has been compared to Bacon's Castle in Surry County, one of the oldest-surviving houses in Virginia. Bacon's Castle was a brick Jacobean mansion built about 1665 by Arthur Allen. During the rebellion of Nathaniel Bacon Jr. (c. 1676) the house was briefly garrisoned by forces loyal to Bacon and opposed to Governor Berkley. Hence the building's fame as a rebel stronghold.²² Waterman's famous work on Virginia architecture mentions three cruciform homes similar to Page's; Bacon's Castle in Surry County, Malvern Hill in Henrico County and Criss-Cross at Providence Forge. Bacon's Castle resembles Page's house in that one tower at the building's front serves as a porch entrance and the rear tower at the back of the building contains a stairwell. Yet Bacon's Castle was much larger than John Page's home. The Allen home had a brick basement, two floors and an attic. Page's home, like Criss-Cross and Malvern Hill, features a basement, one floor and an attic, homes of more modest proportions. All of these homes had a porch entry to a hall area on the first floor. Attic areas were used for sleeping. The English basement each home was built upon is half above ground and half below. The demarcation between basement wall and that of the first floor is marked by a watertable, an architectural term for the indentation of one brick width that makes the basement wall wider than that of the first floor above it. The effect created might be likened to that of a shoulder or step when apprehended by the eye. The brickwork is placed in the English bond style at ground level and below. In this style a course of bricks laid lengthwise known as "stretchers" alternates with a course of bricks laid endwise known as "headers." At ground level and above the wall features a style of brick placement known as Flemish bond in which lengthwise and endwise

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bricks alternate in placement with each other in the same row or course. The watertable "step" or break between the basement and first floor is about chest-high. Steps would have to be built to reach the first floor porch entrance. Seven outbuildings and a brick kiln have also been found by archaeologists working at this site.

The size of John Page's home at Middle Plantation was large for its time in the Virginia Colony. Consider the next statement, made by a contemporary observer.

In the 1680's the Huguenot Durand of Dauphine observed that Virginians, "whatever their rank, & I know not why,...build only two rooms with some closets on the ground floor, & two rooms in the attic above; but²³ they build several like this, according to their means.

John Page's grandson, Mann Page of Gloucester County, would build a three story brick mansion on an English basement at Rosewell in the year 1725. It was, at the time it was built, the largest privately owned brick building in British North America.

The John Page House archaeological site viewed on 14 July 1995 has a brick floor basement underneath the hall and chamber. Much of this brick is turned up on end so as to be firmly seated in the soil underneath. Remnants of wooden frames for wine bottles, broken wine bottle glass and pieces of grain sacks have been found in these rooms. Also found were several leaded glass stems from 17th century wineglasses and bits of Dutch Chinoiserie pattern (blue plate with an oriental design) pottery first developed about 1570 to compete with the Chinese import trade. The English Delftware would not appear until about one hundred years later. Lastly, some stoneware shards, small pieces of windowglass, and winebottle corks were also found by archaeologists working at the site. The length of hall and chamber rooms measured 33 feet. The basement floor underneath the towers was of brick tile, which would also have been used on the building's roof. The basement to the front porch tower contained the remains of flower pots and broken stoneware storage jugs. Each basement room has its own square sump pit and sloped bricks, brick channels and covered brick drains promote the drainage of rainwater. The Chamber basement room features two brick pillars intended to support the summers beams or girders to which floor joists would be attached. A similar construction was used at Bacon's Castle.²⁴ It was 42 feet from the front porch tower to the rear stair tower wall in John Page's home. The hall and chamber rooms are approximately 18 feet wide while the square towers are only 10.5 feet wide. The hall room was approximately 20 feet long and the chamber approximately 13 feet long. These are figures based on inexact measurements taken at the site on 14 July 95. An estimate made by a writer for the Virginia Gazette estimates that the house measured 2,500 square feet.²⁵ Like other Jacobean Colonial dwellings, the Page House was built with windows containing diamond shaped panes of windowglass held in lead metal frames. The chamber basement reveals evidence of a fireplace

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chimney and it is speculated another might have existed against the opposite wall of the hall.

During Bacon's Rebellion John Page remained loyal to the temporarily deposed Governor Sir William Berkley. Yet the rebels met at Middle Plantation, a convenient assembly point, in August of 1676 and received support from many of the colony's leading men including four members of the council. A month later Governor Berkley, who had fled to the Eastern Shore settlements, returned across the bay with new troops. Berkley took Jamestown and Bacon then sought to fortify Green Spring. Loyalist hostages, the wives of several Berkley supporters were taken hostage and paraded along the rebels' earthworks then under construction. Consider the next quotation.

this was the seizure of the wives of the loyalist leaders, Mrs. Nathaniel Bacon Sr., Mrs. James Bray, Mrs. Thomas Ballard, Mrs. John Page and others whom he placed upon the ramparts while he dug his position.²⁶

John Page had hosted Governor Berkley in his home prior to Bacon's Rebellion. Berkley stayed at the Page home in 1676 after returning from the Eastern Shore and executed one of the rebels at Page's house.

In 1683 John Page acquired more land (330 acres) at Middle Plantation, obtained a lease on five tenements in Westminster and paid L 104²⁷ for the ransom of his nephew Matthew from Algerian pirates.

John Page is known to have authored two books in manuscript form, one of which entitled Sacrament of the Lord's Supper does not survive and is only known by report of its title. The other work, entitled A Deed of Gift to My Son, was written in 1687 as a New Year's present to John Page's second son, Captain Matthew Page, founder of the Page line at Rosewell. This work was reprinted by Bishop William Meade in the year 1856. In the forward to this edition Meade records that the book, long lost, was found in the Geddy (silversmith) shop by a Mrs. Hay and returned in March of 1776 to John Page, the great great grandson of the author. It was found to be of merit and deserving of a new printing. One copy of the 1856 volume survives in the Rare Book Room of Swem Library at the College of William and Mary.

The title page of this book reads A Deed of Gift to my dear son Captain Matt. Page one of his majesty's justices for New Kent County in Virginia 1687.²⁸ It is an amazing work written in the vernacular of a bygone and antique era, yet affords instruction and entertainment even in our time while providing an insight into the thoughts and meditations of one of the Virginia Colony's important figures. The intent of the manuscript is explained in an opening passage.

My Dear Son:--As by God's blessing I have, by my honest

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industry, provided for my family, and so settled my estate to your honored mother, your loving brother, and yourself, and others of my posterity and relations, which I charge you to observe and perform--being such bequests, I thank God, as may be of necessary use for your temporal prosperity--so I have also, with more zeal, by God's assistance, drawn out of the well of living waters (the sacred word of God) and, from the pious labors of good men, a divine gift, comprising such a portion of heavenly treasure as may be profitable for your eternal consolation. O Lord, in all my meditations, words and writings, I beseech thee inspire, instruct, and direct me.²⁹

Having provided for his children's worldly needs, John Page now intends to instruct his son Matthew in wisdom and the management of a proper Virginia gentleman's life by drawing upon some classical but primarily biblical passages. In pithy aphorisms and striking figures of speech the Protestant doctrine and social values of John Page emerge. For his time he must be considered as an educated man. His study of scripture is founded upon the understanding that the Bible is unique and different from secular literature, far better and more worthy of study than even the classics of Roman antiquity.

The canonical books of the Old and New Testament are exact maps of the heavenly Canaan, drawn by the Holy Ghost, the authentic record of the Church, the deeds of Almighty God, and evidences of man's salvation...³⁰ With knowledge of these alone, you may, and, by ordering your life accordingly, shall go to heaven: but with all other learning, you may, and without this, shall certainly go to perdition without the mercy of God in Jesus Christ... These holy writings (to use David's expression) are right, rejoicing the heart. Plutarch's Morals, Seneca's Epistles, and such like books--in these moral writings there are excellent truths, but they are far short of those sacred books. Those may comfort against outward trouble, but not inward fears; they may rejoice the mind, but cannot quiet the conscience. They may kindle some flashy sparks of joy, but they cannot³¹ warm the soul with a lasting fire of solid consolation.

In this passage we learn that the seat of wisdom and religious faith is in the human heart.

The cosmology of the next passage is mixed with an appraisal of human anatomy, the various correspondences cited provide a stunning insight into the mind of the 17th century. It is an extended analogy describing the human condition that speaks in poetic images.

A man is an abridgement of the world, he hath heaven resembling his soul: earth his heart, placed as in the

midst of a center: the liver is like the sea, whence flow the lively springs of blood: the brain, like the sun, gives the light of understanding: and the senses are set round about like stars. It is a spiritual vessel, made to contain the holy dews of grace, which made glad the city of God (Psalm XLVI.v.). It is ever full of that precious juice, or with the pernicious liquor of sin. As our Savior saith, (Mat XV.19.): "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." "Know you not," saith his Apostle, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor 111. 16.)³²

The centrality of the heart "as in the midst of a center" places John Page's Earth at the center of his cosmology. The heart image also reminds one of the heart-shaped figure on the monogram cartouche that decorated John Page's home at Middle Plantation and was displayed with other archaeological artifacts during public viewing of the Page home foundation ruins. Page's home was at the heart of his world and the center of his heart's concerns. The next passage continues the extended metaphor to introduce a new idea, the inspirational power of the heart that makes it the chief organ.

All the faculties of man follow the heart, as servants the mistress. When the sun risith, all rise,--beasts from their dens, birds from their nests, men from their beds. So the heart leads, directs, moves the parts of the body and powers of the soul, that the mouth speaketh, hand worketh, eye looketh, ear listeneth, foot walketh: all producing good or evil, from the good or evil treasures of the heart. (Luke VI. 45.) Naturally He hath placed it in the midst of the body, as a general in the midst of his army. Bulwarked it about with breast, ribs, back. Lest too cold, the liver lies not far off to give it kindly heat; lest too hot, the lungs lie by it to blow cool wind upon it. It is the chief, and therefore should wisely temper all other members.³³

The heart, chief of all organs, like a general is in the midst of his army, bulwarked about by other organs in supporting positions. These other organs provide functional assistance while the heart in turn tempers all other members. The phrase "wisely temper all other members" contains a subtle social admonition applicable to political bodies.

John Page explains the ministry of Christ by means of the traditional biblical metaphor of the Advocate, counsel for the defense in a heavenly court proceeding, the last judgement. By means of this comparison Page gives a description of the duties of a defense attorney.

It is well observed, that an advocate appearing in the behalf of guilty persons is to do three things. To allege what may satisfy the Law, and yet the guilty

person escape. To present the humble confessions and entreaties of the sinner. And to interpose his own desires and requests to the Judge in the delinquent's behalf. In all these considerations Christ is our advocate, as is before mentioned.³⁴

Page will later comment on the duties and desired qualities of a judge.

A judge that is furnished with the virtues of wisdom, meekness, courage and honesty, sits on the seat of judgement as one that never forgets that he must appear before the Judgement-seat of Christ. So he executeth justice, as never losing the sense of mercy; so he showeth mercy, as not offering violence to justice. He can at once punish the offence, and pity the offender. He remembers his oath and fears to violate it; to an enemy he is not cruel, to a friend he will not be partial. And if he have but once cut the skirt of justice, as David the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smites him for it. He minds no other clock on the bench, but that of his own conscience. He will not offend the just, nor afford a good look to harlots; nor doth he so disregard their persons, as to wrong their causes. He will maintain piety, but not neglect equity. In court he looks not before him on the person, nor about him on the beholders, nor behind him to the bribes; nay, he will not touch them in his closet or chamber, lest the timber and stones in the wall witness against him. The lewd fear him, the good praise him; he will be a father to orphans, an husband to distressed widows. Many prayers are laid up for him in heaven: and when he dies they, with the assistance of angels, shall bear him to blessedness.³⁵

An impartial judge shall always show mercy, according to John Page. His oath requires him to perform his duties as a sacred vow before the Almighty obligates him. Sincerity of heart in heartfelt pity for the accused is central to the function of his role. Conscience, self-judgement, the ability to measure one's own behavior against the standards of divine justice, proceeds from the workings of the heart. This precedes the appointed task of judging the sins of others. The good judge exercises a paternal role in coming to the assistance of widows and orphans. As the patron of the defenseless, prayers await him in heaven where they shall bear him up like angels wings on judgement day.

In a comment concerning military duties, John Page seems to indicate that his son has already relocated to New Kent County. Matthew had worked as deputy escheator for the Middle Peninsula (the region between the York and Rappahannock Rivers) as early as 1686. His appointment as one of his majesty's justices in New Kent County indicates a residence there. Matthew Page moved to Gloucester County and had a residence at the Rosewell site by the year 1695. In 1690 the church of Petsworth Parish taxed tobacco-

producing property owned by Captain Matthew Page at the northern boundary of Gloucester County. By 1700 he is referred to in these same church records as Colonel Matthew Page.³⁶ The military duty of a Christian is noted by John Page.

My son, although you have removed yourself from that place where you received a commission to command a company of foot soldiers, yet you still bear the title of captain; and I must intimate to you that we are all soldiers, as Christians.³⁷

John Page in his book for Matthew, has advised his son on the proper deportment of a Christian planter devoting himself to the duties of public office in roles thrust upon him by virtue of social position. The planter aristocrat plays an organic role in the life of his community, as an organ of the state. Matthew Page would, like his father, become a Governor's Council member. Throughout his life he would be concerned with matters of law. William Fitzhugh refers to a booklet comprising "a short description of Virginia & a methodicall Digestion of the Laws thereof...a very usefull acceptable book..." in a letter to an English relation, Nicholas Hayward. In this letter Fitzhugh praises a book of Virginia law that he would like published in England. This letter is dated 9 July 1694.³⁸ A copy of this work with several pages of commentary written in blank pages at the end of the book, believed to be from the hand of Matthew Page, is now in the Library of Congress. It was a copy owned by Governor John Page of Rosewell. Matthew Page served on the 1699 committee for law revisal in the House of Burgesses.³⁹

On May 1, 1699, in a ceremony at the College, Governor Francis Nicholson, members of the Governor's Council, delegates to the House of Burgesses, and others. One of five speeches given by students survives. It records the prominence of John Page in the effort to obtain a college charter, which had been done three years and four months earlier. The origins of this effort are referred to.

The first publick consultation about it was at a meeting of some private Gentlemen at James City in the month of february 1690. The person that had the chief honor to be the first mover in procuring such a meeting was the Honorable Colonel Page; to whom and his family this great work has been exceedingly beholding.⁴⁰

John Page wrote his will on the fifth day of March in the third year of the reign of King James II, 1687. In it he leaves houses, household goods and property in the Middle Plantation (York County) and Neck-O-Land area (James City County) to his wife and oldest son Francis. After noting that Matthew has failed to take a wife yet, John grants his son Matthew a water mill and property at Mehixton in New Kent County if Matthew will agree to live there, or so the curious language of the document would seem to indicate.

Itm forasmuch as I have been at great charge in ye purchase building and placing on my plantation called Mehixton in New Kent County a competent number of Negro slaves, cattle, horses, sheep, hoggs & other things convenient and necessary to manage ye said plantation to advantage...and as yet find in my son Matthew Page no inclination to take a wife...appoint at the time of my death...for the better of such person or persons that shall succeed in ye inhabiting my said plantation Mehixton and enjoy my said mill.⁴¹

Nine months after John Page wrote his will, his son Matthew would reside in New Kent County. The December 31, 1687/January 1, 1688 New Year's date on the A Deed of Gift book establishes this fact by naming Capt. Matthew Page a justice for New Kent County on its title page. Matthew Page married Mary Mann of Timberneck Plantation in Gloucester County about the year 1689 when he was 30 years of age and she was 17.⁴² Matthew Page was a supporter of Commissary James Blair in the Governor's Council in a faction that included Philip Ludwell, Benjamin Harrison, Robert Carter, and John Lightfoot.⁴³ This faction was often in opposition to Governor Francis Nicholson.⁴³ Blair proposed in 1699 that all churches be provided with a minister's glebe house. Blair specified that this building "should be frame, with cellar and garret, and that the main story would consist of two rooms with a minimum pitch of ten feet, and a large closet." Interior walls would be plastered, windows would be of glass in casements, the chimney would be of brick and the roof would be shingled. The kitchen would be in a separate outbuilding. The description of this building seems similar to the design of John Page's home, but must have been considered a middle class dwelling by Blair.⁴⁴

John Page died on the 23rd of January 1692 at age sixty five. It is thought that by this time he had gone to live on one of his York River estates. His body is buried at Bruton Parish where both an antique tomb monument and a memorial obelisk of a much later date (c. Jan 1878) may be viewed. His wife, Alice, followed him six years later in 1698 at age seventy three. John Page's monument observes that he was a member of "their Majesties Council", perhaps noting this as his greatest achievement. "Their Majesties" in this inscription refers to William and Mary, who reigned 1690-1702. Queen Anne succeeded them, ruling from 1702-1714.⁴⁵ In April of 1699, during the tenure of Governor Francis Nicholson, the Assembly passed an act directing the establishment of a Capitol and the City of Williamsburg at Middle Plantation.⁴⁶ The colony at that time extended some eighty to one hundred miles from the coast. Governor Francis designed the City of Williamsburg, having already designed the City of Annapolis in Maryland. In Williamsburg he named two streets for himself (Francis and Nicholson), two for the king of England (King and Nassau), one for each of the four Kingdoms of the British Crown (France, Scotland, Ireland and England), and one for Prince George of Denmark, the husband of

future Queen Anne. Duke of Gloucester, the main street, affords a distant view of the Capitol from the Wren building, ⁴⁷ a mile away. It was named for Queen Anne's only surviving child.

Page's kindness to others is shown in two incidents; the first in which he pledges sufficient tobacco to the church vestry to pay for the care and raising of a bastard child of one of his indentured servants.⁴⁸ The second is from his will in which he writes:

Itm, it is my will and desire that such negroes or slaves as I shall die possessed of at Middle Plantations, ye Neck of Land, and Mehixton, when they or any of them grow aged and past their labour, that such decrepit slave or slaves be kept provided for and maintained by their respective owners and masters, with clothes, diet & all other necessaries, in as good sufficient and like manner as when they were able to work.⁴⁹

Alice Page, who died on the 22nd day of June in 1698, left instructions in her will to be buried next to the bodies of her husband, John, and her son, Francis.

In the name of God Amen, I Alice Page of Middle plantation in Yorke County Virg. being sick and weak in body but of pfect memory & understanding praised be to God Doe make and ordain this my last Will and Testament in manner & forms following...My body I committ to ye Earth to be decently buried according to ye Reights and Ceremonies of ye Church of England in ye Church yard att Middle plantation between my late dear husband John Page Esqr his grave and my well beloved Sonn Capt ffrancis Page his grave, And itt is my desire yt over my Grave Erected with brick with equal height with my Dear husband and Sonn's graves there be laid a polisht black Marble Stone...I doe give and bequeath unto Bruton pish for ye use of ye Church one good pulpit Cloth and Cushion⁵⁰ of ye best Velvitt Att ye discretion of my Executor...

Alice Page's donation to the church is evidence of her piety.

John Page came to the Virginia Colony as a merchant of some means and established himself by virtue of commercial connections as a politically powerful tobacco planter. He transported new settlers to the colony in its early years and brought over a number of women at a time when there was a shortage, the population being predominantly male. John Page established plantations in the countryside and brought the beginnings of industry with the building of mills, homes and storage buildings. The presence of a brick kiln at the site of his home suggests that its bricks were made on the site. At the time of his death he was one of Virginia's leading planters, owning about seven thousand acres of land. By way of comparison, this is half of what William Byrd II owned and a

third of the Carter holdings. Robert Beverly, with thirty-seven thousand acres had a plantation over five times as large.⁵¹

John Page was a member of the church vestry in his parish. Page actively promoted the construction of a new church at Bruton Parish. Page was perhaps the first person to promote the establishment of a college in the Virginia Colony. By participating in political activity he served the public in a career that included offices such as court justice, delegate to the House of Burgesses and member of the Governor's Council. He established a dynasty that would exert powerful influence during both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. A study of the life of John Page presents a model of a successful merchant-planter during the Golden Age of the Plantation Era in Virginia History.

Notes:

1. Patrick Lee Plaisance "Dig Reveals Colonist's Eccentric Side" Daily Press Newport News, VA Friday 19 May 95 Pg 1
2. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater, VA 1965 pg 9
3. Cecil Wray Page Information Booklet for the Page-Nelson Reunion 1994 Rosewell Foundation Gloucester VA 1994 pg 8
4. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Bridgewater, VA 1965 pg 33
5. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC 1978 pg 13
6. Bishop William Meade Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia Vol.I J.P. Lippincott Company Philadelphia PA 1858 pg 147
7. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater Virginia 1965 pg 37
8. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater VA 1965 pg 11
9. John Frederick Dorman and Virginia M. Meyer Adventures of Purse and Person: Order of the First Families in Virginia 1607-1625 Dietz Press Richmond VA 1987 3rd ed pg 409

10. Ivor Noel Hume "For Necessary Change" The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Spring 1995 Williamsburg VA pg 18
11. Nell Marion Nugent Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants 1623-1666 Genealogical Publishing Company Baltimore MD 1969 pg 279
12. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater, VA 1965 pg 29
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15. Bishop William Meade Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia Vol. I J.B. Lippincott Company Philadelphia 1858 pg 146
16. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC 1978 pg 16
17. Patrick Lee Plaisance "Dig Reveals Colonist's Eccentric Side" Daily Press Newport News VA Friday 19 May 95 pg 1
18. Susan M Stuntz Director of Communications Information from Colonial Williamsburg Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg VA 14 July 95 pg 2
19. David Muraca and Cathleene Hellier Archaeological Testing at Bruton Heights Department of Archaeological Research Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg VA April 1992 pg 10
20. Susan M. Stuntz Director of Communications Information From Colonial Williamsburg Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg VA 14 July 95 pg 1
21. Susan M. Stuntz Director of Communications Information From Colonial Williamsburg Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg VA 14 July 95 pg 2
22. Emily J. Salmon and Edward D.C. Campbell Jr. The Hornbook of Virginia History 4th ed. The Library of Virginia Richmond VA 1994 pg 219
23. Warren M. Billings "Imagining Green Spring House" Virginia Cavalcade Vol 44 No 2 Autumn 1994 The Library of Virginia Richmond pg 94
24. Thomas Tileston Waterman The Mansions of Virginia Bonanza Books New York for UNC Press 1945 pg 22

25. Bill Tolbert "Grand Before the Palace: Bruton Heights Dig Unearths Stately Page House" The Virginia Gazette Saturday 15 July 1995 Williamsburg VA pg 1
26. Wilcomb E. Washburn The Governor and the Rebel W.W. Norton & Company 1972 pg 81
27. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC pg 18
28. Col. John Page A Deed of Gift: To My Dear Son Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 title page This is a reprint of a work in manuscript dated 1687
29. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 11
30. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 12
31. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 13
32. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 39
33. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 40
34. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Philadelphia 1856 pg 108
35. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Richmond VA 1856 pg 175
36. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC 1978 pg 25
37. John Page A Deed of Gift Henry B. Ashmead Richmond VA 1856 pg 180
38. Richard Beale Davis William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World 1676-1701 University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, NC 1963 pg 326
39. Richard Beale Davis William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World 1676-1701 University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 1963 pg 328
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44. Clifford Dowdey The Virginia Dynasties Little, Brown and Company Boston MA 1969 pg 197
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46. Alf J. Mapp, Jr. The Virginia Experiment: 1607-1781 Hamilton Press New York 3rd ed 1987 pg 188
47. Harold B. Gill "A Street Called Francis" Colonial Williamsburg Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg VA Winter 1994-1995 pg 42
48. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC 1978 pg 20
49. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater VA 1965 pg 20
50. Richard Channing Moore Page Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia C.J. Carrier Company Bridgewater VA 1965 pg 30
51. Claude O. Lanciano Rosewell: Garland of Virginia The Delmar Company Charlotte NC 1978 pg 20

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Virginia. A valuable reference work.



(From the original portrait by Sir Peter Lely, London, 1690.)

COL. JOHN PAGE,
Williamsburg, James City County, Virginia,
FIRST OF THE PAGE FAMILY IN VIRGINIA.

DIED 23D JANUARY, 1692, AGED 65

1
I



° HERE LYETH Y^E BODY OF MATHEW PAGE[°]
 GENT WHO DECEASED Y^E FIRST OF FEBR^Y
 ANO. DNI. 1631 , TOGETHER WITH HIS
 LOVING MOTHER ISABEL PAGE WHO DYED
 Y^E 9 OF IANV^{RY}: ANO: 1629 . WHICH MATHEW
 PAGE GAVE AT HIS DECEASE TO Y^E PORE
 OF THIS PARISHE Y^E SUMME OF TWENTY
 POUND FOR EVER , BEING AGED 37 . °

BRASS FROM THE CHANCEL OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BEDFONT, CO. MIDDLESEX,
 ENGLAND.



COAT-OF-ARMS OF COL. JOHN PAGE,
FIRST OF HIS FAMILY IN VIRGINIA,

AS EMBLAZONED BY J. S. AND A. B. WYON, CHIEF ENGRAVERS OF HER MAJESTY'S SEALS,
287 REGENT STREET, LONDON.

Col. John Page was born in England, 1627, and emigrated to Virginia about 1650 when he was about twenty-three years of age. According to his tombstone he died 23d January, 1692, aged sixty-five.

His wife Alice (Luckin?) died at Williamsburg, James City Co., Va., 22d June, 169- (last figure obliterated), aged seventy-three.

The following is an exact copy of the coat-of-arms and inscription on her tombstone:



Here lyeth the Body of ALICE PAGE
 wife of JOHN PAGE of y^e County of York
 in Virginia. Aged 73 years. Who
 departed this life the 22d day of June
 Anno Domini 169-.

The last figure is obliterated, but it looks like 8: thus, 1698.

In regard to the above inscription on the tombstone of "ALICE PAGE, wife of John Page, of y^e County of York in Virginia," it may be stated that the two counties of York and James City come together at Williamsburg, Va., so that Col. John Page might have

TOBACCO

*Deeply
Rooted
in
America's
Heritage*



INFORMATION FROM . . .

Colonial Williamsburg

Susan M. Stuntz, Director of Communications
P. O. Box 1776
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 14, 1995

Contact: Lorraine C. Brooks
(804) 220-7280

ARCHAEOLOGY AT JOHN PAGE HOUSE FOUNDATION SITE NEARS COMPLETION

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. -- Archaeologists wrap up their work this month at the site of Colonial Williamsburg's new Bruton Heights School Educational Center. As they bring this phase of the project to a close, they take with them a wealth of knowledge about the home of John Page, the wealthy 17th-century aristocrat who founded Middle Plantation, the town that preceded Williamsburg.

The brick foundation of Page's house was discovered three months ago during construction of a road on the south side of Bruton Heights School. Since then, the archaeological dig has revealed an all-brick house -- similar to Bacon's Castle -- built at a time when most homes were wood.

Archaeologists now are concentrating on ensuring the foundation is properly preserved. With all the artifacts removed, the next steps are to cover the site with a layer of sand and excavated fill to ensure its protection and preservation.

Reburial of the foundation is essential, notes David Muraca, staff archaeologist. "Seventeenth-century bricks cannot survive exposure to the elements, especially freeze-thaw cycles.

Reburial should occur as quickly as possible to avoid further deterioration of the foundation."

The access road to the new library will be shifted about 20 feet south and away from the Page house foundation. Once the foundation is covered and construction on the south side is completed -- about mid-1996 -- Colonial Williamsburg will outline the profile of the foundation with bricks fired in the Historic Area, and provide descriptive signage, according to Beatrix Rumford, vice president for special projects.

Built in 1662, the house featured two matching square towers on the front and back; these were called porch and stair towers. These projections gave the house a shape commonly referred to as a cross plan. "This is a wonderfully crisp, intact footprint of a 17th-century high gentry American house related to Bacon's Castle and a handful of other early cross-shaped houses surviving in the old English colonies," Ed Chappell, director of architectural research said.

The intricate details Page put on the outside of his house also are unique. "Several decorative bricks have been found including five that feature raised characters and symbols," said project archaeologist Dwayne Pickett. "The letters 'P' and 'A', the date '1662' and a heart make up a set of bricks with the initials of John and Alice Page and the date the house was constructed." (The archaeologists didn't find the 'J'.)

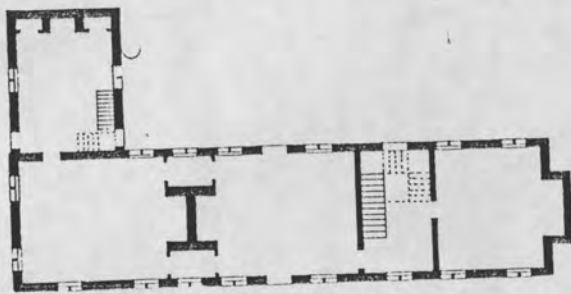
The house had a full English cellar, with four unheated rooms, one underneath each tower and two in the main section.

Artifacts discovered in the cellar include broken wine bottles -- some of which still had the corks intact -- and a concentration of burned wheat seeds. Broken stoneware storage jars and earthenware flower pots were found in the porch tower above a cache of wine bottles that sat on the tile floor.

Page came to Virginia in 1650 and quickly rose to prominence in local politics, becoming a member of the House of Burgesses in 1655, High Sheriff of York County in 1677, and a member of the Governor's Council in 1680. His wealth and political appointments allowed him to accumulate more than 10,000 acres of land in several different counties including 330 acres in Middle Plantation, the community that preceded Williamsburg.

Colonial Williamsburg acquired the Bruton Heights site from the Williamsburg-James City County schools in 1991 as part of a real estate trade. The restored school will be part of an educational campus that will include the DeWitt Wallace Collections and Conservation Building and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library. The project should be complete in early 1997.

Wishart house in Princess Anne County, and the ruins of Malvern Hill in Henrico County, remain. Altered examples that now possess partitioned-off central halls are Bacon's Castle, the Thoroughgood house, and Criss-Cross in New Kent County. Even in England the use of an entrance door in the center of an axial hall was unusual at this period, Aston Hall near Birmingham being a rare example. Yet Greenspring, probably the greatest Virginia house of the century, was in a sense an overgrown cottage without the real attributes of a mansion. If Latrobe had spared the house to us it would have been an open sesame to the way an important personage housed himself in the first century of the Colony. Of the richness of the interior finish we can only conjecture, but it was probably paneled in oak in the style of Jacobean houses in England, though no example of such finish seems to remain in America.



BACON'S CASTLE, Surry County.



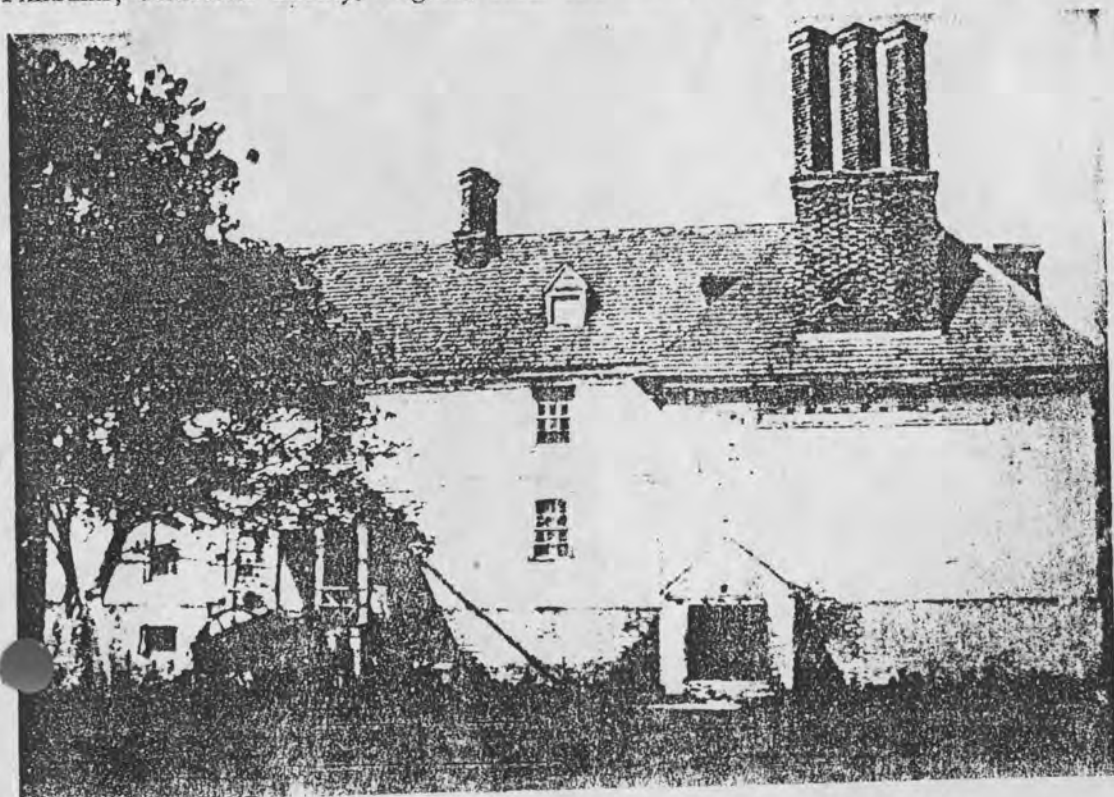
MALVERN HILL, Henrico County.

The usual conception of bare puritanical rooms in Virginia, examples of which still remain in New England, must be discarded in view of finds of remains of rich polychromed decorative plaster work in the foundations of an early house in Jamestown.⁵ Parallel fragments from a destroyed house long forgotten were found in the bank of the Ware River on Robbin's Neck in Gloucester County. These pieces are large



BACON'S CASTLE, Surry County, c. 1650-76. Sole high-Jacobean house in America. *Brostrup.*

FAIRFIELD, Gloucester County, Virginia, 1692. The mansion was burned about 1897. *Cook.*



X

In Williamsburg, Virginia 14 July 95

Basement
storage

3 Stories

1st Floor

his house had brick tile
roofs, diamond-shaped
windowpanes and basement
sumps connected to covered
brick drains and
floor contour
channels

John
Page Home

built 1662

burned 1720

I Hall
II Front
Tower
Parlor
III Chamber
Stair
IV Tower

2nd Floor
bedrooms

Postholes

Stair
Tower

New
Trench

Wine
Bottles in
Chamber
Basement

basement
doorsteps

fireplace:
certainty

III
chamber

The
Hall

fireplace:
conjecture

Grain
Sacks in
Hall Basement

Over
brick
kiln
Here

seven outbuildings

X 10 TO THE CENTIMETER
LUPPEL & ESSEN CO. MADE IN U.S.A.

A Stair beam
holes

B Bricks Replaced
Foot of Stairs

C Pillars for
Summer Beam

D Stair Post

E Footings

F Sump
Drain

G Brick
Tiles

H Regular
Bricks

Porch
Tower

Enclosed
Porch

Front
Porch
Steps

Flower Pots
in Porch
Basement

ZACH
LOESCH

33 Feet

Patrick Ropree Field Technician

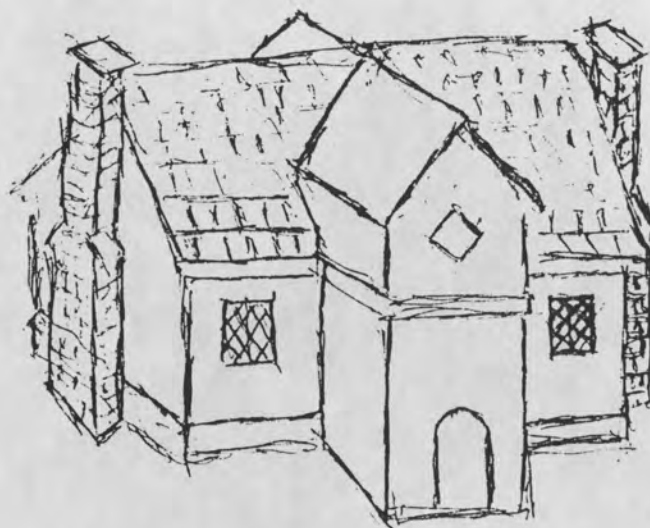
XI

42 Feet

Thanks to
Miyaca
to the Archaeologist

33 Feet

Home of John Page
C. 1662



In Williamsburg Va
Zack Loesch 14 July 95

With thanks to
WILLIE GRAHAM
CURATOR OF ARCHITECTURE
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

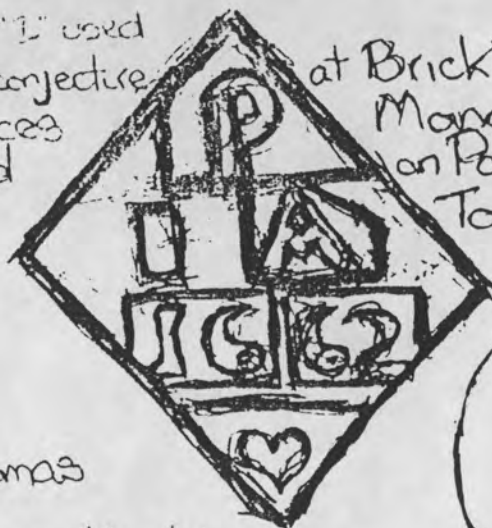


line Bottle
Seal

TBY"

James and Thomas
Blay

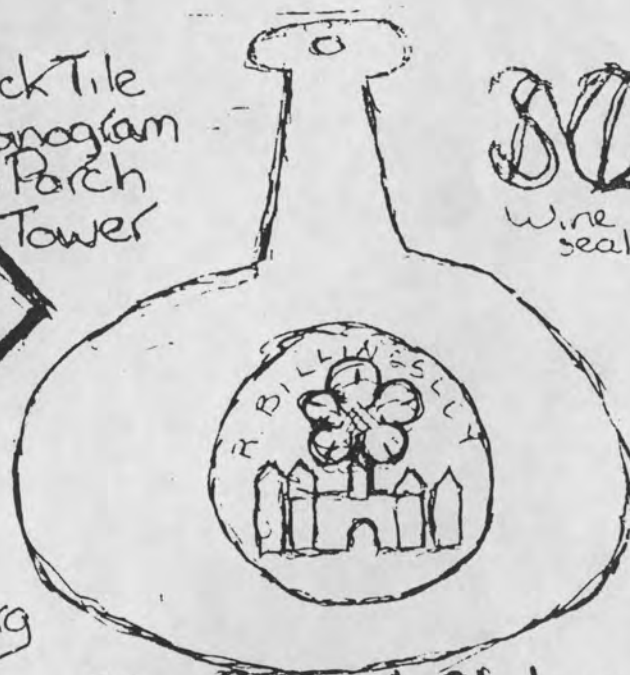
Letter "I" used
for "J" conjecture
5 pieces
found



at Brick Tile
Monogram
on Porch
Tower



Wine bottle
seal



Brick Outbuildings
John Page House in Williamsburg
Artifact Exhibit: 14 July 95

ZACK LOESCH w/ thanks
to Pegeen McLaughlin
Delftware: Staffordshire

Chinoiserie Pattern Blue Plate

"570 developed to compete with
Chinese Imports Dutch

Shaft and Globe
Richard Billingsley
Tudor Rose w/ Five-Towered
Castle

Eng
1670

C. 1650

Eng Delft later, is newer

DEED OF GIFT

TO MY DEAR SON,

CAPTAIN MATT. PAGE,

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES FOR NEW KENT
COUNTY, IN VIRGINIA.

1687.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY HENRY B. ASHMEAD,
GEORGE STREET ABOVE ELEVENTH.
1856.